

Joseph Schliesman

Comments upon reading the mule deer management plan:

Overall, a well written and informative plan. I have high hopes for WA mule deer in the future. I am excited to take my young son hunting in the near future and hope to pass on traditions I gained from my family and father. I especially liked the Part 2: Habitat management zones section and the in-depth evaluation of each zone.

Resource allocations: Good idea in the sense that less popular, primitive weapon seasons like Archery and Muzzleloader are given first try. It also limits overcrowding and seems to be working for the last 30 odd years. However, can we not find a way to offer a less expensive alternative to the prohibitively expensive "Multi-Season Tags" now offered? It seems that allowing a hunter to choose 2 tags would generate more revenue, much needed revenue. Something similar to ID or MT, except the hunter who draws a multi-season tag could simply pay for say, an Archery *and* Rifle tag, instead of having the State place its hopes on someone paying 140 dollars on a 3 tag option. Not having numbers in front of me, I would imagine that Mule deer hunters would be very inclined to purchase 2 of the three tags at a slight increase per tag. Another option I support, and I really like, having the option of *buying* an additional season for \$50-60 dollars.

3pt Minimum: KEEP THIS. Please do not follow in the steps of Oregon and take away a general season which includes open units for E. WA. mule deer. I would like to continue hunting every year without the added stress of guessing if I can or not because of unit selectivity brought upon us by advocates of the "more horn (antler) is better at any cost" crowd. The scarcity of large, mature mule deer will only change slightly if the traditional units for mule deer are made into draw only. Umtanum (GMU 342) would be a prime example of how a select draw does VERY LITTLE for overall herd productivity. I was told by the former biologist in Yakima that the reason the unit was brought out of *draw only* was because it was not producing large antlered deer and the buck:doe ratio was skewing in the wrong direction. (I also guessed this took lots of pressure off of surrounding units as a bonus) Please keep 3pt minimum AND open units as we currently have.

Population Monitoring:

The plan states a prohibitively expensive helicopter monitoring plan and I personally have witnessed the helicopter monitoring in progress. It seems effective but this highly taxed state has little money from every DNR or Parks person I talk to . My suggestion: would it be hard to harness the voluntary nature of hunters/hikers? If the WDFW created a monitoring app in which a hunter, or in say spring, a hiker, could enter the number and type of animal seen and the unit in which it was seen? I think the biologists would not like the data since it would be non-scientific, but it would be invaluable to know. Not knowing the data collection methods, maybe this wouldn't work. But it seems that we could gather new ideas on ways to spread out the funding available and incorporate volunteer efforts. (Maybe even an "incentive" to collect the data could be given, like a draw for a free license or something.)

Habitat/Tribal issues/predators:

I am personally not totally sold on the idea that habitat is the key factor to mule deer numbers or decline. I would agree it is the largest piece of the pie chart. However, poaching and year round hunting/over harvest by various tribal entities also has an impact. It's just not PC to say it unless it's "poaching". I have personally seen a tribal hunter shoot a doe and when it did not die on the spot, they drove off. (I called the WDFW enforcement and they didn't do much, they

couldn't) I am actually a member of a small, non-recognized WA State tribe. So, I do not speak as someone with prejudice, but someone with an idea that tribal hunters should obey laws designed to keep a resource alive, regardless of what our ancestors did 8,000 years ago. You won't see me flinging an Atlatl, but you will see me buying a license every year regardless of recognition. I see that the WDFW is pumping a lot of funds into habitat management and I believe most hunters support this. The major issue I think is and WILL effect deer numbers is predation by large animals such as lions and, yes, wolves! Idaho and Montana are losing hunter participation dollars due to drastic declines in animal numbers. (Number which could also be effected by my next point as well) Another issue that is out of the States control is how the Forest Service manages public lands. I would love to see a chart of mule deer (Or blacktail for that matter) numbers in correlation to the drastic drawback of FS timber sales and forest use changes. The last 30 years has seen a dramatic change in the forest ecosystem and it is finally changing not due to humans, but natural elements like beetles and fires. One might argue we set the stage, but the FS has done little, because of state law, in the area of controlled burns and even logging.

APR/Hunter Density:

I am not sure what sort of person is asking to shoot spike mule deer, the paper says "some hunters" how many is *some*? Every hunter I am in contact with supports the APR currently in place. I'm 37 and remember the pre-APR days. Lots of spikes before that last weekend when a quantity of big deer would migrate into the Nile unit. WA has some very good mule deer hunting, IF the hunter scouts, hikes and does just a little research and relies on feet instead of quads or trucks. Most hunters are more concerned about a burgeoning non-hunter population, voting with emotion, and destroying our tradition and opportunity. Instead of putting efforts into APR elimination or worrying about hunter density, most hunters should be directing efforts to keeping hunting alive as an institution and heritage, spreading across the globe from time immemorial.